

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001620

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B. NEULING  
INFO SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY  
SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVILLE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/29/2015  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [ECON](#) [ZI](#) [MDC](#)  
SUBJECT: MDC Split Gets Nastier

Ref: HARARE 001608

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Eric T Schultz under  
Section 1.4 b/d

-----  
Summary  
-----

1. (C) With the campaign for and against the Senate behind them, the two rival MDC factions have begun the battle for control over the party's institutions and assets. The Ncube faction drafted a legal application on November 28 seeking to bar party president Morgan Tsvangirai from speaking for the party, in line with his supposed "suspension" from the party (reftel). Tsvangirai in return called a National Council meeting for

SIPDIS

December 1, during which 57 of the 66 Council members decided the party should "disassociate itself" from the leaders of the rival faction. Although Tsvangirai has clearly won the backing of the bulk of the party, Ncube and his allies appear determined to carry the fight to friendlier ground - the GOZ-dominated courts, which regardless of the merits, may very well side with the rebels in an effort to further hamstring the opposition. End Summary.

-----  
Ncube Faction Turns to Courts  
-----

2. (C) Apparently attempting to enforce a letter from party Vice President Gibson Sibanda as head of the party's Disciplinary Committee purporting to suspend Tsvangirai from the party, the pro-election faction drafted an urgent court application at the beginning of the week seeking to bar the party president from speaking publicly. According to a report in the independent press, the application was spearheaded by a "parallel" MDC secretariat that the rebels had set up in Bulawayo. MDC MP Priscilla Misihairabwi-Mushonga, who has publicly sympathized with the rebels, told us on December 2 that the application, which was drafted by Harare MP Trudy Stevenson, was only submitted to the High Court on December 1, after apparent difficulty finding a willing lawyer. (N.B. Ncube is likely barred from personally submitting the application for conflict of reason interests.)

-----  
Tsvangirai's Riposte  
-----

SIPDIS

3. (C) Getting wind of the court move, Tsvangirai moved forward a National Council meeting scheduled for December 3 to December 1 to preempt the possibility of a court ruling siding with the Ncube faction. Attended by 57 of the body's 66 members, the Council, which according to the MDC constitution supercedes the Disciplinary Committee, adopted by consensus a resolution (e-mailed to AF/S) overturning Tsvangirai's suspension on appeal.

4. (C) The resolution further stated that the Council, acting on behalf of the party, had decided to "disassociate itself" from Sibanda, Ncube, Deputy Secretary General Gift Chimanihire, Treasurer General Fletcher Dulini Ncube, Secretary for Information Paul Themba Nyathi, and Secretary for Policy and Research Stevenson, all of whom were suspended from their leadership positions. Harare MP and national youth chairman Nelson Chamisa was named Nyathi's replacement and National Chairman Isaac Matongo - who briefly sided with Ncube et al before finally aligning himself with the president - became acting secretary general and treasurer general until the party Congress names a permanent replacement.

5. (C) The Council also moved to assert its control of the party's assets and financial statements, many of which are under the control of the Ncube faction. The resolution established that only Tsvangirai and the Chairpersons of the Party, the Women's Assembly, and the Youth Assembly were authorized signatories for party transactions. Treasurer General Dulini Ncube was ordered to turn over the party's financial statements.

-----  
Comment  
-----

16. (C) Tsvangirai continues to hold the upper hand in the intra-party battle with both the party's grassroots and its structures firmly on his side. Moreover, MDC supporters as a whole are likely to read the Ncube faction's appeal to the ruling party-manipulated courts as a sign of desperation and as an act that is well beyond the pale for opposition politicians. That said, Ncube and the rebels could very well succeed in gaining control of the party name and assets through the courts. And, in the interval, their legal maneuvers are likely to paralyze the party vis- vis the government until at least the MDC Party Congress in February, and possibly beyond.